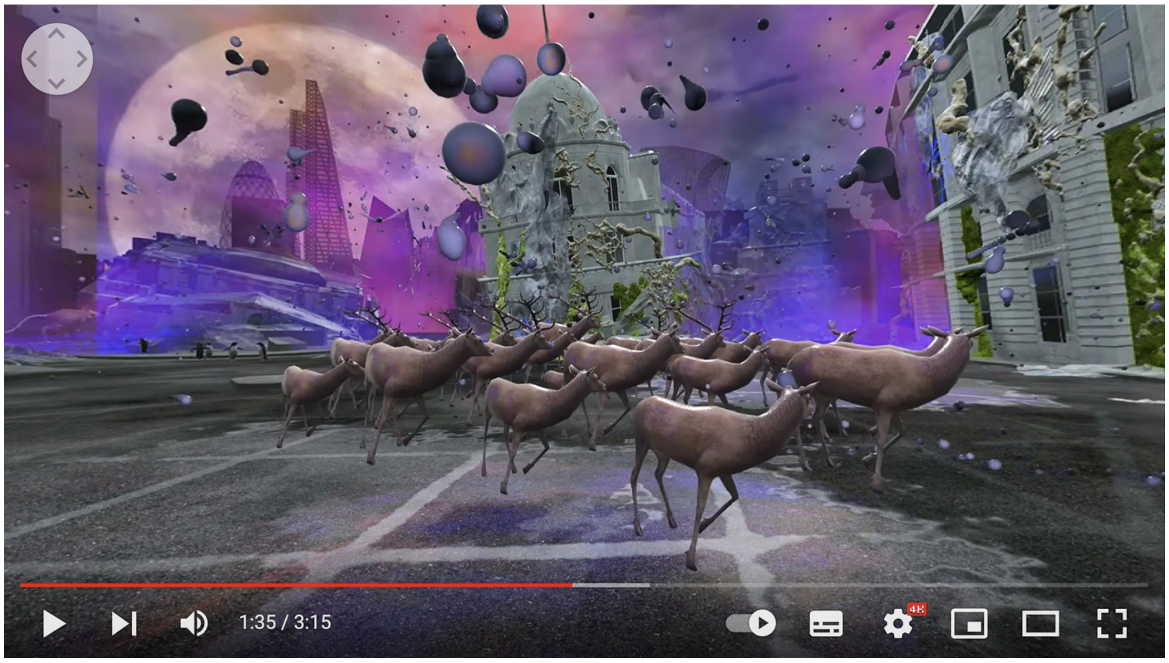
Artwork

Finance and Society
2023, 9(3): 69-71
© The Author(s)
10.2218/finsoc.8992

Pandemonium (do androids dream of?)

Ami Clarke
Banner Repeater, UK



Still image from *Pandemonium (do androids dream of?)* VR and sound work, 2021. A 360-degree capture from inside the VR (player POV) is available on YouTube. For the 3D experience to work, please view on the YouTube app downloaded onto a smart phone. SOUND ON. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3RbhqOB7HA>.

***

Ami Clarke works with art and technology, critically engaging with the complex protocols of surveillance and disaster capitalism in everyday assemblages, with a focus on the inter-dependencies between code and language in hyper-networked culture. Clarke utilises various digital media, with aspects of live programming, to produce video and sound, sculpture, and virtual reality works that often come together as installations. <https://www.amiclarke.com/>.

Corresponding author:
Ami Clarke, Banner Repeater. Email: ami@bannerrepeater.org
https://doi.org/10.2218/finsoc.8992

Pandemonium (do androids dream of?) was produced during a Beyond Matter residency in 2021 at ZKM Center for Media and Art in Karlsruhe, Germany, and a 'risk' related residency at Radar, Loughborough University, in 2020. The work consists of a virtual reality environment with sound work, an online dashboard, and a Twitterbot (@trackntracer). For more information on *Pandemonium*, visit the project website: <https://www.amiclarke.com/pandemonium-do-androids-dream-of>.

***

Pandemonium takes the defining medium of our age – animation – to the next level in VR. Utilising the affects of a cartoon world, where the unlikely is entirely probable, a troop of deer break into a syncopated dance routine, whilst flying plastic gloop speaks of 'emergence', in a world that has become way too lively by far.

Emergence is often imagined as an untapped burst of creative potential, with Silicon Valley valorising emergent properties in order to profit from unethically derived data, whilst the reality that disruption and mutation brings forth is typically far from beneficial for humans. Drawing on the oft-used market phrase, *animal spirits*, to describe the 'inexpressible' drive – the life source of the markets – the work engages with what this might mean if we took vitalism to an absurd degree, to grasp something of the 'vital realism' that our technologically assisted sensorial range now affords, as we emerge in synthesis with our environment.

Whilst the animal spirits of the economist Keynes' 'Low Animal Spirits' typically drive the market through bullish opportunistic behaviours, the critters in Pandemonium speak of 'zoonotic spillover' that exemplify the interdependencies revealed by the pandemic. They evade categorisation by becoming their own species, live as kin with their humanoid siblings, point to a nature that is naturally queer, and a synchronised desire to do things differently – that takes account of contingency to develop fluid data practices that are consensual and oscillate between being in/visible, as necessary.

***

The work came out of a prolonged investigation regarding the use and misuse of data, regarding both medical and behavioural analysis, in relation to the Covid-19 apps: <https://radar.lboro.ac.uk/contexts/on-pandemonium-a-new-work-by-ami-clarke/>. An accompanying twitter bot (@trackntracer) was deployed as a 'research assistant', taking the temperature of public debate, retweeting mentions of the NHS Covid-19 track-and-trace app. The feed was a lively spectrum ranging from conspiracy theories to considered concerns responding to important issues to do with privacy, agency, and trust, in relation to the app's use of data.

An online dashboard accompanies the work <https://pandemonium.beyondmatter.eu/>, showing sentiment/emotion analysis of the Twitter feed that in turn influenced the intensity of the plastic gloop in the VR. The dashboard also includes air pollution sensing, from the locality of each gallery/residency: Loughborough University, and ZKM, Karlsruhe. The dashboard provides context for how government communications, social media, and other forms of news distribution influence the outcomes of strategies built to moderate risk during a crisis. It draws upon the re-insurance industry expertise of the company Metabiota (the artist spoke to Ben Oppenheim during the pandemic), whose Epidemic Preparedness Index is configured to address many of the intersectional complexities that converge in crisis. The dashboard is an ongoing project, informed by issues regarding the handling of data during the pandemic, but relevant also to other contemporary crises and challenges, including for example those associated with climate change.

https://doi.org/10.2218/finsoc.8992 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Acknowledgements

Pandemonium (do androids dream of?) is an Ami Clarke/xeno-studio production. VR build/programming assistance: Ami Clarke, Luke Weston, Diana Finley, and AccuCities architectural modelling. Live data programming: Rob Prouse. Animal characters: Junnichi Suko, with further customisation by xeno-studio. Sound/technical assistance: Ami Clarke and François Kirmann Gamaury. The work was developed during a Beyond Matter residency (2021) at ZKM Center for Media and Art in Karlsruhe, Germany. With special thanks to Lívia Nolasco-Rozsas and Felix Koberstein at ZKM. The work was exhibited at Immerse (2023) in Tallinn Art Hall, Estonia, curated by Corina L. Apostol (Tallinn Art Hall) and Lívia Nolasco-Rózsás (ZKM, Karlsruhe).

https://doi.org/10.2218/finsoc.8992 Published online by Cambridge University Press